



Affective Center for Therapy

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THE THERAPEUTIC PROCESS

A Man's Point of View

Men, if you are having trouble with your taxes, you would seek out a specialist in taxes. If you are having trouble with your car, you would take it to a mechanic. However, if you are having trouble with anxiety, depression, anger or your relationship, you tell yourself, "A real man solves his own problems. A real man does not share his problems with anybody."

What is wrong with this picture?

What are you saying? That, if you are a real man, it is OK to seek help on everything in your life except for your personal feelings and behaviors? Or, are you saying that a real man never needs help to figure out his taxes by himself, can fix what is wrong with his car and create great relationships? If that is what you are saying, what stops you from figuring out what is causing your anger outbursts, your depression and what is wrong with your marriage?

A man who believes that "I may not be right, but I'm never wrong," has a belief that if he is wrong, his wife and/or girlfriend will look down on him, lose respect for him and leave. Which one are you? Are you the man who recognized that he needed help in certain areas? Or, the one who always has to be right?

A lot of men believe that if they have a problem, it somehow means that they are not okay or that they are wrong. The fear is that if you're wrong, then you won't be lovable and your mate will leave you or at the very least, you will lose respect in her eyes.

In relationships, it is not a problem of who is right or who is wrong. In relationships, whether with your mate or with your children, the question is, "Is what you're doing getting you what you want in the long run?" Is what you're doing with your wife getting you what you want? Is what you're doing with your children getting you what you want in the long run? If it is not, then you have two options, you can always do it harder (if yelling doesn't work you can always yell louder) or you can do something different. I am personally into doing things differently.

So, from time to time it might be helpful to get assistance in areas that are causing you problems. If you are looking for someone to help you with your car, would you go to a mechanic who does not understand how a combustion engine runs? Or, if you were having trouble with your taxes, would you have someone who has no understanding of the tax codes do your taxes?

There are some therapies and therapists that think that “all of your answers are inside of you.” This approach believes that if you are given the right atmosphere, one where you feel safe and accepted, where you feel free to explore the scary stuff that is inside of you, you will find all your own answers. These approaches suggest that the answers are within you and all you need is “unconditional positive regard” from a supportive therapist to find your answers. This form of “insight therapy” can work for some.

I asked a therapist acquaintance, who uses this orientation, to respond to these two questions in writing:

What do you see as the Overall Goal of Therapy?

What is the therapist trying to do with the client?

(If you are seeing a therapist you might ask him/her these same two questions.)

Her response was as follows.

I choose to address the unconscious psyche. I see my role to simply be a witness to the process of client's a struggle to gain insight into the reasons for his distress. Like a mother simply stands by their baby, unconditionally, as the baby tries to walk, and falls in the process, gets up, falls. The mother cannot help him. He has to do it alone. But the baby wouldn't learn to do it without being witnessed. For some unknown reasons, the unconscious psyche cohere's the self only in the presence of a witness. For my clients, I am simply a silent witness in their struggles towards self sufficiency. (Is she saying that therapists are nothing more than glorified babysitters?)

These therapists tend to be non-confrontational and non-directive. They are emphatic and very accepting of your feelings. They are excellent at setting up an atmosphere where you feel understood and loved. They do not give quick, easy answers to your problems. Most of these therapists believe that anger is a problem and should be discouraged in their patients.

You can often recognize a therapist with this approach by their responses to you during your session: “And how does that make you feel?” “I hear you saying that the divorce didn’t go well for you.” “What else are you feeling?” “What do you see yourself doing now?” Etc. Of course, not all therapists view counseling this way.

My problem with this approach is that I do not know how many times I have listened to a Client say, “I know what I feel. I can accept what I feel **but** . . .” Or, “What you are saying makes perfect sense and I can understand it **but** . . .” And, that is where the client gets stuck. The Client seems to never get past the **but**. Insight and understanding never seems to get them past this block. There always seems to be something that keeps them stuck.

Here is an alternative way of looking at your healing process. Would you have a doctor operate on your heart who has no idea of the universal process of how a heart functions?

There are **universal** physical processes in all humans. All human hearts work the same way. All human livers work the same way. Many of our organs can be transplanted from one person to another. No matter where you are in the world, no matter what language you speak, all minds and bodies have universal similarities. All eyes work the same no matter where you are in the world. It does not matter if it is male or female.

As there are **universal** physical processes true of all humans, there are also **personal** physical processes that are unique to only you. For example, your heart’s EKG is unique to you.

In much the same way that there are two processes in the physical realm, **universal** and **personal**, there are two processes to emotional/psychological healing. There are the universal truths in the psychology realm, just like there are universal physical truths for all human bodies.

Here are some examples of universal psychological processes. The opposite of love is not anger or hate, it is indifference. And, people are going to do what they are going to do, not what you think they should do. A third example: Fear has never stopped someone from doing what they wanted to do; fear is the excuse that is used for not doing something. These universal processes are true no matter what country you are in or what language you speak!

In the world of counseling, some therapists look at both the universal process and the client’s individual/personal process. These therapists see themselves not as the change agent, but more as a coach whose role is to

teach you how your mind and body work and to teach you how to work with other members of the team. The goal is to teach the patient how to be a therapist for themselves and for the ones they love.

The therapeutic process is teaching the client the universal processes that apply to their situation, then helping them to apply these processes to their personal process. These therapists do not believe that their role is to make the patient feel better, but to frustrate the client until they stop doing what does not work for them.

When it comes to therapy, it is important to be aware that there are different types of therapists as they are different types of doctors and different specialties in medicine.

So, how do you know which is the best approach for you? Hopefully, what has been given here makes some sense of what is available. However, the old adage is true; you cannot make a decision about something you're not aware of. If you are to find out what works best for you, my suggestion is that you have at least three visits to see if how that particular therapist works is right for your situation.

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